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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the actions and outcomes of a seminar attended by State Education Agency (SEA) directors of gifted and talented programs in December 1994. The meeting identified important issues in the gifted field, including: lack of gifted preservice course work and training programs; service for students in the regular classroom; the need for quality assurance through evaluation, state accountability systems, and dissemination of research; the need to mobilize parents; and the need to build on Goals 2000 and other federal legislation. Action steps the directors need to take are described, including: creating a means for communication, dialogue, and meeting with one another; consolidating findings of projects and research; developing and publishing best practice models for identifying and providing services to gifted students; endorsing the adoption of national standards for a more challenging curriculum for all students; and creating a forum that allows SEA directors and preservice/postservice providers to narrow the gap between practice and what is being taught in professional development courses. Appendices include a list of participants, an Ohio Javits Project description, a summary of SEA Action Seminar evaluations, and a comprehensive list of challenging issues developed at the seminar. (CR)

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ED 399 693

Similitude! Energy! Change!

**An Action Seminar for
State Education Agency Directors
of Programs for the Gifted and Talented**

EC305024

**Hosted by the
Ohio Javits Project
Washington, DC
December 6, 1994**

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January 1996

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Executive Summary: SEA Action Seminar

Activity

The Ohio Javits Project hosted an Action Seminar in Washington D. C. on December 5, 1994 for state directors of gifted and talented programs. The purpose of the seminar was to identify issues challenging the field of gifted education and to develop action steps to improve services to gifted children.

Issues Identified

- There is a lack of preservice course work and training programs for both regular education teachers, as well as, specialists in gifted and talented education.
- Service for gifted students in the regular classroom as part of the range of services.
- Need for quality assurance in evaluation and state accountability systems.
- Dissemination of research and successes.
- Parents need to mobilize for the rights and needs of their children who are gifted and talented.
- Gifted education needs to build on Goals 2000 and other national initiatives.

Suggested Action Steps

- State education directors for gifted and talented programs must create a means for communication, dialogue, and meeting with one another to more effectively meet the needs of gifted and talented students nationwide.
- The group should consolidate the findings of the projects, research, and pilot programs that have been done individually by the states so that the group can build on what has already been done.
- SEA directors should develop and publish best practice models for identifying and providing services to gifted students.
- SEA directors should endorse and provide support for the adoption of the national standards for a more challenging curriculum for all students.
- SEA directors should define and set markers that delineate appropriate services for gifted students.
- A forum needs to be created that allows SEA directors and preservice/postservice providers to narrow the gap between practice in the field and what is being taught in professional development courses.
- SEA directors need to advocate continued U.S. Department of Education leadership and involvement in assuring support for gifted and talented students.

Introduction

The title of this report, **Similitude! Energy! Change!**, describes the distinguishing characteristics of the SEA Action Seminar held in Washington, D.C. on December 6, 1994. Participants were energized by the opportunity to come together and share their experiences, frustrations, and dreams in meeting the needs of gifted and talented students in their respective states. The similarity of the issues and situations facing the state directors of gifted and talented programs provided common ground for discussion and collaboration. Together, in a very short time, they were able to identify major issues, strategies, and actions steps associated with improving the quality of gifted education.

Change is the desired outcome of any action seminar. This report suggests the next steps needed in order for the change process started by the state directors to move forth. Continued communication among the directors is a critical requisite for collective action. As key stakeholders in policymaking agencies, state directors influence how gifted students are served in their respective states. By pooling their knowledge, energy, and skills, state directors can serve as a clearinghouse providing information on what is happening across the nation in gifted education. By doing so, they could aid both practitioners and researchers who are interested in best practices in gifted education. Energy, commitment, and perseverance will be required to continue what was started at this meeting.

The Ohio Javits Project is grateful to the U. S. Department of Education for providing the funding that allowed the state directors to participate in this meeting. We are also appreciative of the efforts of Sheila Draper and her colleagues at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) in planning and conducting the Action Seminar. Without their assistance this meeting would not have happened.

We hope the readers of this report will be aided in their own efforts to meet the needs of gifted children.

**SEA ACTION SEMINAR
OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S JAVITS PROJECT**

SUMMARY REPORT

Prepared by Patricia A. Place, Ph.D.

The Ohio Department of Education sponsored a national meeting for state education agency (SEA) personnel responsible for gifted and talented programs in their respective states. The purposes of the meeting were twofold: (1) to provide these state representatives with information about the Ohio Javits Project; and (2) to conduct a forum for talking about the issues and strategies that would improve identification and service delivery to gifted children.

The meeting which was held in Washington, DC on December 6, 1994, was designed and coordinated by Nancy Hamant, Ohio Department of Education (ODE) consultant for the Javits Project, and Sheila Draper, Project Director with the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) in Alexandria, Virginia.

The meeting was held at the Academy for Educational Development. Thirty-four participants from 27 states and American Samoa (See Appendix A for the participants list) attended the meeting which was facilitated by Patricia A. Place, Ph.D..

This report describes the meeting process, lists issues that were identified and prioritized, and the strategies that were recommended, and provide suggested action steps necessary to continue the process begun during this meeting. Part I will describe how the meeting was conducted and the methodology used to identify issues and make recommendations. Part II will summarize the issues that were identified by the participants by ranking of the top five issues. Part III will present recommended strategies for dealing with the issues identified in Part I. Part IV will provide suggested action steps to keep this group moving in the direction charted during this meeting.

I. Meeting Processes

The meeting was organized around three major topics: (1) description of the Ohio Javits Project; (2) the identification of prominent issues; and (3) the development of potential strategies to address these issues. After a group review of the meeting purposes and processes, the group divided into three discussion groups and identified pertinent issues related to the education of gifted and talented students. When the group reconvened, Ohio Department of Education staff described the objectives, activities and results of the Ohio Javits Project which concluded with a lively question and answer session (See Appendix B for a summary of the Ohio presentation).

The group then engaged in a priority-setting activity to determine the issues of most importance and broke into subgroups to identify strategies to address the highest priority issues.

The forum concluded with reports from representatives of each discussion group and Nancy Hamant's summary of the day's many accomplishments.

Participants were extremely vocal about their appreciation for the chance to have these discussions. One of the most vocal recommendations which appeared to be unanimous among the participants, was that the action seminar was a very important and exceptionally useful activity and that some way must be found to conduct such meetings on a regular basis (See Appendix C for a summary of the evaluation results and participants' comments).

Issues Identification

Participants were divided into three discussion groups, each guided by a professional moderator. Sheila Draper (NASDSE) led one group, G. Wayne West (ODE) led the second, and Beverly Matson (NASDSE) led the third. Patricia Place instructed each group to be generative and to identify as many issues as they could during the session. The goal was to develop a comprehensive list of issues. So participants were given an hour and a half for uninterrupted discussion. Later in the afternoon, NASDSE staff analyzed and categorized the issues identified by each of the discussion groups. When participants reconvened, they were given tokens for voting on issues they considered to be the most important. Once the participants' votes were counted, the top six issues were tallied. These issues are addressed in Part II of this report.

Strategies

Participants were given the choice of which issues-oriented group they wished to join to discuss strategies. Participants were instructed to identify strategies to address two of the six issues that had emerged from the prioritization exercise.

Since thoughtful and collaborative discussion was the goal, the participants again had a significant block of uninterrupted time to thoroughly discuss each issue and to reflect on proposed strategies. Three examples of strategies identified during these discussions are contained in Part III of this report. A spokesperson from each group reported on the group's discussion when the participants reconvened.

Part II summarizes the issues that were generated during small-group meetings. While the small-group discussion reflected the differences resulting from socioeconomic and political circumstances of differing regions of the country and the urban-rural dichotomy, the group was quickly able to find commonality of issues surrounding the provision of services to gifted students.

II. Prioritized Issues

The issues, generated in small groups and consolidated into a single list, were presented to the large group. Participants then voted on the issues they thought were most important and deserved further discussion. The following topics or issues received the most votes:

Lack of preservice course work and training programs for regular education teachers as well as specialists in G/T

Service for gifted students in the regular classroom

Need for quality assurance through evaluation, state accountability systems, and dissemination of research and successes

Parents need to mobilize for the rights and needs of their children who are gifted and talented

Need to build on Goals 2000 and other national initiatives (e.g., School-to-Work)

When all issues were synthesized, the following categories emerged (see Appendix D for the list of issues):

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Personnel | • Parents and Advocates |
| • Personnel Preparation | • Service Delivery |
| • Public Attitudes | • Goals 2000 |
| • State and Federal Policies | • Eligibility and Identification |
| • Funding | |

III. Strategies

A description of the strategies identified for three of the most popular issues illustrates some of the changes that state representatives are recommending to improve and refine the education of gifted and talented students. The three topics are (1) services for gifted students in the regular classroom; (2) personnel preparation issues; and (3) quality assurance.

Services for Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom

1. Build on what has already been done. Someone (e.g., Office for Educational Research and Improvement, states, universities) needs to do a comprehensive analysis regarding what we already know about what works for which students. We also need to know what hasn't worked out well in the past.
2. Identify alternative ways to meet the needs of gifted and talented students in the general environment. This will require developing processes for conducting student needs assessment, training general education teachers, and providing necessary materials and resources.
3. Deal with attitudes. For example, we all need to recognize that everyone should be working together for the benefit of the student. No one person "owns" the child's education.
4. There is a myth that every teacher can work well with every child. Recognize that there are different learning styles and different teaching styles and that these don't always match. When there is not a good match there needs to be flexibility to meet the needs of the student.
5. Team with other teachers or other professionals to end the isolation of specialist teachers.
6. Restructure the day to allow for planning and staff development.
7. Develop and be aware of the full range of services. Service in the regular classroom is one point on this range. Students should have access to a full range of services.
8. Develop best practices models and expose general educators to these best practices by modeling and sharing information and resources.

Personnel Preparation Issues

1. Identify the skills and competencies needed for effective instruction of gifted and talented students.
2. Develop training modules for personnel.
3. Review the training provided in graduate and undergraduate programs in gifted education to determine the strengths and needs of training programs.
4. Provide support for the adoption of standards; seek the endorsement of the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted (CSDPG).
5. Share promising practices concerning initiatives that work, perhaps with the assistance of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI).

6. Provide input on guidelines for personnel preparation.
7. Create opportunities for advanced students to be challenged while progressing at their rate of learning by
 - Continuing to provide input into national and state reform efforts;
 - Exploring ways for CSDPG to meet more often;
 - Exploring mechanisms for contact and dialogue with one another (e.g., electronic bulletin boards, fax lists, and conference calls); and
 - Developing and disseminating position papers.

Quality Assurance

1. Answer the question: "Do our programs make a difference?"
2. Define what "appropriate" service is. We can begin by first identifying what we now know and second involving the research community in conducting further research.
3. Identify and disseminate data on indicators of success. We might look at the number of merit scholarships, comparison of test scores, and out-of-level testing.
4. Identify how to successfully meet the needs of underserved populations (e.g., those with lower socioeconomic status).
5. Review results of Javits projects to identify what works. We should encourage the U.S. Department of Education to examine these projects and other related data, and/or we should begin to conduct this search ourselves.
6. Develop criteria for "state success."

Action steps are suggested in Part IV, which, if implemented would allow this group to move forward in better meeting the needs of gifted and talented students. These action steps are not comprehensive in scope, but rather are the next phase of action to be taken in order for state directors to accomplish their goals.

IV. Action Steps

1. State education directors for gifted and talented programs must create a means for communication, dialogue and meeting with one another to advance the objective of meeting the needs of gifted and talented students.
2. This groups should consolidate the findings of the projects, research and pilot programs that have been done individually by the states so that the group can build on what has already been done.
3. SEA directors should develop and publish best practice models for identifying and providing services to gifted students.
4. SEA directors should endorse and provide support for the adoption of the national standards for a more challenging curriculum.
5. SEA directors should define and set markers that delineate appropriate service is for gifted students.

6. A forum needs to be created that allows for SEA directors and preservice/postservice providers to narrow the gap between what is happening in the field and what is being taught in professional development courses.
7. SEA directors need to advocate continuance of U.S. Department of Education leadership and role in assuring support for gifted and talented students.

V. Conclusions

The very favorable evaluation of this meeting documents the need for state-level administrators of programs for gifted and talented students to meet and engage in intensive dialogue on a regular and on-going basis.

Four points clearly emerged from this particular dialogue that support the need for the action steps to be implemented in order to provide meaningful educational services to gifted students across the nation.

1. There is significant commonality among the issues confronting state directors regardless of the size, location or diversity of their state.
2. There is a need to involve parents as advocates for seeking support for developing and maintaining programs to meet the needs of students who are gifted and talented.
3. Some process needs to be established for ongoing sharing of promising practices identified by federal, state, and local research and experiences.
4. Group members strongly affirmed the value of communication with one another and expressed a need for continued discussion and interaction.

SEA directors could play an important role in assisting the field with best practices models and in bridging research and practice. The four conditions listed above provide a firm foundation on which to build and move forward in improving the educational opportunities for the nation's gifted students.

SEA ACTION SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

Linda Evans	ALABAMA
Lui Tuitele	AMERICAN SAMOA
Martha Bass	ARKANSAS
Catherine Barkett	CALIFORNIA
Frank Rainey	COLORADO
Peggy Dee	DELAWARE
Jewel Hoopes	IDAHO
B. Sheets	INDIANA
Leland Wolf	IOWA
Joan Miller	KANSAS
Patricia Dial	LOUISIANA
Valerie Terry Seaburg	MAINE
Mary Bailey-Hengesh	MICHIGAN
Conrad Castle	MISSISSIPPI
Michael Hall	MONTANA
Sheri Nowak	NEBRASKA
Michele L. Munson	NEW HAMPSHIRE
David Irvine	NEW YORK
Jean Newborg	NORTH DAKOTA
Nancy Hamant	OHIO
G. Wayne West	
Anita Boone	OKLAHOMA
Anne Elam	SOUTH CAROLINA
Evelyn Hiatt	TEXAS
Janice Guerrero	
Linda Alder	UTAH
Jane Craig	VIRGINIA
Gayle Pauley	WASHINGTON
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Sheila Draper, NASDSE

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Washington DC

Ohio Javits Project Description

The intent of the project was to improve methods for identifying and providing services to young (K-3) historically underserved gifted children--including those who were economically disadvantaged, those who were culturally and linguistically diverse, and those with disabilities--through the development of a replicable inservice training model.

Specifically, the project (a) increased parents' involvement in their children's education by creating widespread community/parent awareness of the needs and characteristics of young gifted children; (b) provided inservice training to elementary teaching staff in improving individualized instruction within the regular classroom to accommodate young gifted children; and (c) provided intensive training over the course of two years to 25 principal-led building teams in the identification of and provision of appropriate services to young gifted children who were economically disadvantaged.

The Project

- Targeted young gifted children (K-3) to find and develop the talents of culturally and linguistically diverse children, those from lower socioeconomic circumstances, and those with disabilities.
- Nurtured these children by developing a variety of challenging learning opportunities, promoting flexibility of services, and involving parents and teachers.
- Involved five building-level teams in each of the five Ohio sites: Akron City School District, Athens County Area (Alexander Local Schools, Federal Hocking Local Schools, Nelsonville City Schools), Cincinnati City Schools, Toledo City Schools, and Youngstown City Schools.

Some of the lessons learned included the following:

- There was a great need expressed by building-level teams for basic information regarding (1) the educational needs of gifted children; (2) strategies for parents and educators to work together as cocreators of appropriate services for gifted children; and (3) how to be effective advocates for children and provide services to meet their needs.
- There is a need to nurture, on an on-going basis, both parents and teachers in their roles as active decision-makers in the provision of appropriate services. Strategies to redefine their roles had to be provided through the project as well as support for their efforts.

**Ohio's Javits Project
Summary of SEA Action Seminar Evaluations
Washington, DC
December 6, 1994**

Participants were asked to evaluate the seminar by answering nine questions using a Likert-type scale and two questions that were open-ended. Twenty-one participants out of 26 returned evaluation completed sheets.

1. Utilization of time	15	4	Excellent
	6	3	Good
		2	Average
		1	Poor
			N/A

Comments:

Facilitator kept us on task and moving forward toward goals.

Well planned with good follow-through!

Kept discussion rolling in meaningful way, but sometimes felt rushed.

Well organized to make best use of limited time and allow interaction among participants.

2. Clarity of purpose of the seminar	13	4	Excellent
	7	3	Good
		2	Average
		1	Poor
	1		N/A

Comments:

Good advanced preparation.

I am a bit unclear as to what happens next with the ideas we generated. Who will implement?

3. Facilitators	14	4	Excellent
	6	3	Good
	1	2	Average
		1	Poor
			N/A

Comments:

Excellent! Very motivated.

They were good!

We are a difficult group to handle and they did it very well!

Clarified, kept us on track.

Outstanding! Sorry I don't remember her name.

Well prepared, skillful.

4. Identification of issues	15	4	Excellent
	6	3	Good
		2	Average
		1	Poor
			N/A

Comments:

Novel approach to summarize (with the dots).

Good procedure for this.

Appendix C

5. Development of action steps

6	4	Excellent
10	3	Good
5	2	Average
	1	Poor
		N/A

Comments:

Considering the time we had to develop actions plans, the group did well. The plans could have been better developed with additional time, however.

Felt rushed at this point.

This is always a tough step, especially when states differ so.

Needed more time to really make next steps a reality. Money would also be helpful.

More time was needed here. Also many participants needed additional information and clarification (e.g., what are requirements of Goals 2000).

6. Ohio's Javits Project presentation

14	4	Excellent
5	3	Good
1	2	Average
	1	Poor
1		N/A

Comments:

Very informative.

I needed a little more context for the information.

Clear and concise.

I don't think I caught the essence of it.

It is too bad you didn't take more time. Quite interesting.

7. Opportunity for attendees to participate

20	4	Excellent
1	3	Good
	2	Average
	1	Poor
		N/A

Comments:

Plenty of encouragement to share ideas.

Yes, thanks!

Small discussion groups and activity orientation allowed for participation.

As a new member to the group, I felt quite welcome and included.

8. Handouts

10	4	Excellent
9	3	Good
1	2	Average
	1	Poor
1		N/A

Comments:

I am looking forward to the final report.

Great/useful.

Small handout was best.

Appendix C

9. Usefulness of the meeting for me

<u>13</u>	4	Excellent
<u>6</u>	3	Good
<u>2</u>	2	Average
<u> </u>	1	Poor
<u> </u>	N/A	

Comments:

A time for collaboration and communion with others in gifted/talented leadership positions nationwide. I felt that the usefulness came from the participants to the group as a whole.
Helped me to realize the similar and different needs of states across the nation.
It was important to me to hear that my questions are states-wide concern.
Good introduction to the group and its purpose.

What did you like best about the seminar?

Well planned, meaningful.

The organization of activities and the positive overall spirit of the day's work.

The opportunity to share issues/concerns with my peers from throughout the U.S. - in a well organized format! The structure of the meeting kept us on target, on task, and on time!

Do it again!! Thank you!

Discovery that there is much consensus on issues.

The seminar was well planned. It was helpful to get others' perspectives of issues and to problem-solve together. It was a productive session! Thanks for the opportunity to be a participant.

The best part of the seminar was the opportunity to share ideas with other state directors on the most important issues facing gifted education.

The purpose and the issues that were discussed.

Various ideas presented were really beneficial.

Organization and ability to participate.

The opportunity to find out what Ohio's Javits Project is and the progress it has made. I also appreciated the time spent on a directed task.

Opportunity to interact with other state directors and find out how they are dealing with key issues that impact us all.

Chance to share ideas and experiences.

Organizations and hospitality was great!

The last session, where we set forth the action steps for the key issues - the ideas were very insightful and "doable" in any state.

It was scheduled so that I could attend without any extra costs, so I was able to add what I could (not much) without costing the state (of Ohio) any reimbursements.

Meeting the state representatives before the main conference began.

The opportunity to actually get to action steps - now we need to find resources (time, \$, authority) to implement them.

The purposeful interaction.

Opportunity to interact with colleagues.

What suggestions do you have for improvement?

Clearer communication on date of arrival for meeting. I spent valuable time traveling on the day of the meeting, arriving late and exhausted. Others later told me that they were aware that if they arrived on Monday (the day before) that their expenses would be covered for that day and night. I thought Ohio was paying expenses only on the meeting day Tuesday and Javits would cover Wednesday through Friday. As it turned out, Javits covered Tuesday through Friday. My state covered none of the expenses; but did allow me to attend without having to take leave without pay.

Disseminate follow-up information soon.

The opportunity for more time to problem solve and strategize on areas in which obstacles have been identified.

The time was not enough. A whole day will probably help.

More time!

Appendix C

Need something like this twice a year.

Possibly more time though I know that wasn't an option for you.

Full day may have helped to avoid time crunch when facilitating action steps.

None- I thought it was well done.

Considering the time restrictions, I think we accomplished a great deal! However, as above, the move to actually implement will take more time, money, etc.

More time to really solidify efforts.

More time for "action," next steps.

Need resource person to clarify information. We were not all at the same "starting point" with regard to knowledge we possessed.

List of Issues

Personnel

1. Attitudes of teachers toward identified G/T students and their needs, working with G/T teachers
2. Impact of standards, certification, endorsement (high standards vs. minimal standards).
3. Lack of trained personnel.
4. Lack of leadership at federal and state levels, and institutions of higher education.
5. Generalists vs. specialists.

Personnel Preparation

1. Concern for continuing education for existing personnel (e.g., time/resources).
2. Lack of preservice course work and training programs for regular education teachers, as well as specialists in G/T.
3. Access to G/T preservice.
4. Lack of cooperation among institutions of higher education, SEAs and LEAs.
5. Lack of university-based leadership/ownership.

Attitudes

1. General decline of public support for schools.
2. No support for additional/special needs of children who are G/T.
3. Trend toward anti-intellectualism and G/T seen as "elite".
4. In G/T field, specialists just trying to maintain what they have, not moving forward.
5. Too often support rests on one or a few powerful advocates. When they leave, everything falls apart.

State and Federal Policy

1. Impact of SEA downsizing and restructuring.
2. Lack of nation/state mandates.
3. Differences in policies within states and between districts.
4. The field needs to build on Goals 2000 and the national agenda (e.g., School-to-Work).
5. State and district policies that limit children's plans (e.g., age and grade barriers).
6. National emphasis on "teach to the middle, bring up lower level. No concern for the top."
7. Legal/policy crises take away attention from nonmandated G/T population.

Funding

1. Lack of federal funds, but what funds we have are crucial.
2. Need state sharing of ideas/practices regarding refunding.
3. Impact of shifting from categorical to noncategorical block grants.
4. Shift from state-controlled funding to local control.
5. Funding drives service system: quality, content, eligibility, etc.
6. Implications of the funding equity cases at the state level.

Parents/Advocates

1. Parents fear of change and losing services.
2. Parents need to mobilize for rights of G/T kids.
3. How can staff work with parents?
4. Parents.
5. Too much crises-oriented advocacy.

Service Delivery

1. Need to develop individualized plans, not "G/T class" and differentiated education.
2. Heterogeneity vs. homogeneity grouping.
3. Inclusion in general education.
4. Lack of models (especially secondary).
5. Quality assurance: evaluation and state accountability and dissemination of research and successes.
6. Full range of adaptive flexible services.
7. Pressure to move beyond ID and to develop appropriate programs.
8. Impact of technology and the home-school teaching movement on the future of general education and G/T.

Mobilize Parents

1. Reawaken parents interest and involvement - critical time.
2. Tap into advocacy organizations' meetings and newsletters - inform parents of upcoming issues they need to be involved in.
3. Parent training and conferences (jointly funded by state and local organizations).
4. Form or link with other parent networks.
5. Educate parents on reforms and what reform means. School improvement, TEAMS, site-based TEAMS.

Goal 2000

1. Influencing state plans of Goals 2000
 - a. Identify how G/T fits into plans/statutes/standard-setting efforts in content/performance/assessment.
 - b. Identify key people who will appoint/be on panel.
 - c. Participate and advocate within your agency.
 - d. Articulate implications for G/T and demonstrate reciprocal relationships/support-school improvement/restructuring initiatives.

Eligibility and Identification

1. Assessment and evaluating/criteria.
2. Definition: Lack of clarity
 - define "all"
 - what is gifted?
 - sole use of IQ
3. Need for alternative ID process for under-represented groups.
4. Actual term "gifted" is a problem.
5. How do ethnic and gender difference (identified by research) impact on eligibility?